



# **BLENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: ENHANCING INSTRUCTION IN RURAL SCHOOLS**



Wisconsin Virtual School – Wisconsin's Web Academy



# Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS)

- ❖ **WVS** is a state-led supplemental online program serving grades 6-12
- ❖ **WVS** is Wisconsin's Web Academy (WWA), a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #9
- ❖ **WVS** provides core content, electives, advanced placement, and credit recovery online classes taught by Wisconsin certified teachers
- ❖ **WVS** is managed by **CESA 9** since 2000

# Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS) Stats



- ❑ **WVS** student population represents **60% rural districts** and 40% urban districts
- ❑ 83% of the students are between 16 and 18 years old.
- ❑ 170 school districts accessed courses through WVS in 2009-10.
- ❑ **The top reason students take online courses is because the course is NOT offered in their school.**
- ❑ The average grade for fall 2009-10 was 84%.
- ❑ The average time spent in the course is 121 days.
- ❑ The number of hours spent per week in the course is 6-7 hours.

# Examples of Wisconsin School District Initiatives



- ❑ **Expanding curriculum** (AP, electives, foreign languages, middle school GT options, summer school)
- ❑ **Supplementing curriculum** (blended approach, using own teaching staff, temporary solutions)
- ❑ **Retaining enrollments** (potential dropouts, expelled, homebound, home schooled, Youth Options option)
- ❑ **Sustaining Programs and Positions**
- ❑ **Starting your own LOCAL virtual program or “virtual school.”**
- ❑ **Preparing students with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills** (Michigan’s mandatory graduation requirement, Life Skills, Career Planning)

# K-12 Online Learning:

- ❖ **meeting the needs** for diverse groups of students (urban, suburban, **rural**)
- ❖ **expanding access** to rigorous, multimedia rich, engaging courses
- ❖ **ensuring access** to highly qualified teachers
- ❖ **developing** 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
- ❖ **continuity** of education for students with physical disabilities or prolonged absences from school because of illness
- ❖ **helping** at-risk students who need to retake courses, credit recovery to meet academic requirements
- ❖ **expanding opportunities** for ALL students
- ❖ **providing teachers** with new professional opportunities to teach online and **blended instruction**

# K-12 Online Learning: A Smart Investment NOW More Than Ever

“States must overcome critical education challenges to survive and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy and provide quality educational opportunities to all students.”

Resource: iNACOL (International Association for K12 Online Learning)  
[http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL\\_NowMorethanEver-Ir.pdf](http://www.inacol.org/research/docs/iNACOL_NowMorethanEver-Ir.pdf)

# Unique Challenges in Rural Schools

- ❑ Small student populations, **declining enrollments**
- ❑ High socioeconomically **disadvantaged populations**
- ❑ Computer and Internet **access** non-existent at home
- ❑ **Low** teacher pay, **high turnover**
- ❑ High **turnover** can lead to **low student achievement**

# Unique Challenges in Rural Schools

- ❑ Low achievement leads **poor perception** of quality
- ❑ Poor perception of quality leads to **failed referendums**
- ❑ **Scheduling issues**
- ❑ **Shortage** of highly qualified certified teachers
- ❑ **Fewer electives**



# Enhancing Instruction in Rural Schools

“The loudest and clearest voices were those of respondents representing **small rural districts**. In these places, **online learning** is not simply an attractive alternative to face to face instruction but increasingly is becoming a **lifeline** to basic (high) quality education.”

eSchool News, September 17, 2009, Sloan Consortium “K-12 Online Learning” Study

# Enhancing Instruction in Rural Schools

“Shortages of teachers in high-demand secondary school subject areas such as science, mathematics, and foreign languages, as well, as modest property tax bases and the lowest per pupil expenditures...., have forced rural school districts to use their financial resources wisely and effectively as possible.”

eSchool News, September 17, 2009, Sloan Consortium “K-12 Online Learning” Study

# Enhancing Instruction in Rural Schools

Online learning gives these districts a cost-effective way to deliver courses that otherwise would require hiring teachers, the report says...many of whom “would be uncertified in their subject areas and....would not have enough students to justify their salaries.”

eSchool News, September 17, 2009, Sloan Consortium “K-12 Online Learning” Study

# The Bottom Line

- **Online learning** is a SMART Investment with a proven payoff for students, schools, and society.
- **Online learning** has been shown by research to be academically effective, providing student performance “as good or better” compared to F2F.
- **Online learning** is cost effective for providing necessary courses that are otherwise unavailable, leveraging our best teachers, addressing the dropout crisis, and serving students with unique educational needs.

# Blended Learning: Rural School Lifeline

- “Though blended learning, which combines both face to face and online instruction, hasn’t played a major role in K-12 education so far, many experts say it’s likely to emerge as the predominant model in the future,” according to the Sloan-C report.
- *Blending Learning: The Convergence of Online and Face-to-Face Education*,  
[http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/NACOL\\_PP-BlendedLearning-lr.pdf](http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/NACOL_PP-BlendedLearning-lr.pdf)
- Wisconsin’s Advanced Placement Incentive Program –  
*“Blended Learning Innovations (BLI): Building a Pipeline for Equity and Access”*



# ALGOMA SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ONLINE LEARNING



*Algoma School District*



Annette Walaszek

- Science Instructor for Algoma HS and WVS

# Blending Instruction: the Algoma Story

- Face-to-Face Course + Virtual Course
- 4 Algoma students + 20 students from around the State (2009-2010) - Physics and AP Physics B Course
- 4 Algoma students + 34 students from around the State (2010-2011) –AP Chemistry and Physics
- Algoma students were self-paced, but participated in many labs as a group
- Virtual students were self-paced

# Let's visit with Algoma!

- **Meet Annette Walaszek and her Algoma students – Teal, Michael, Hannah, and Cassidy**
  - ▣ How is the online/blended environment most **different** from a classroom environment?
  - ▣ What do you **like** about online/blended learning?
  - ▣ What are the **challenges** of online/blended learning?
  - ▣ How is your **approach to learning** the content different than for a face-to-face class?
  - ▣ How is your **approach to studying** for tests different than for a face-to-face class?



# Let's visit with Algoma!

- ▣ Blended classes might allow for less face-to-face **interaction with your classmates or teacher**, is that good or bad? Why?
- ▣ Do you have any tips for **managing your time**?
- ▣ Do you think taking an online or blended course will **help or not help with your future plans** whether it's college, workforce, or other areas?

# Let's visit with Algoma!

- ▣ A friend is planning to take an online/blended class and they ask you for your opinion. What advice would you give him or her?



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# Questions for a Blended Instructor

- ❑ How is the online/blended environment **most different** from a classroom environment?
- ❑ What do you **like about teaching** in an online/blended environment?
- ❑ What are the **challenges of teaching** in an online/blended learning environment?
- ❑ How is your **approach to teaching** the content different than for a face-to-face class?
- ❑ How is your approach to **preparing for instruction** different than for a face-to-face class?

# Questions for a Blended Instructor

- ❑ Blended classes provide a **different way of interacting** with your students, is that good or bad? Why?
- ❑ Do you have any tips as a blended learning instructor for **managing your time**?
- ❑ Are there other “non-content” skills, like time management, that you think are critical to **successful student experiences** in an online/blended class?



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# Questions for a Blended Instructor

- A school district is considering offering online/blended class , what advice would you give the them?
- What professional development should be provided for a teacher to assist in preparing them for the blended environment?



*Algoma School District*





**Thank you for your time and  
expertise Ms. Walaszek, Teal,  
Michael, Hannah, and Cassidy!  
Enjoy your school year!**

# Blending Instruction: the Algoma Story

## Advantages:

- ▣ Algoma District is able to offer a face-to-face class even though enrollment is low
- ▣ Algoma District carries a balance with NEWON (Northeast Wisconsin Online Network – a consortium) so more Algoma students can experience online courses



# Blending Instruction: the Algoma Story

## Challenges

- ❑ Face-to-face time can be minimized by need for feedback to virtual students
- ❑ Must address both synchronous and asynchronous class environments
- ❑ All students must be independent learners
- ❑ Training in on-line facilitation is needed for instructors



*Algoma School District*





# **“Online learning a ‘lifeline’ for rural schools”**

eSchool News, September 17, 2009, Sloan Consortium “K-12 Online Learning” Study





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